19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER III

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

142 [164] The Karen are of medium height. On the plains they average about five feet, four inches, in stature, and in the hills they are about three inches shorter. The women are smaller than the men.[1] The hill people have the harder struggle for a livelihood and are also more liable to attacks of malaria. The Brecs show evident signs of stunted growth. On the plains and in the more fertile lower hills we find that the Karen are a stocky race with broad, well-built bodies, strong legs, and well-rounded calves. The legs are often short in proportion to the body. Karen players on a football team are usually noticeable for their sturdy appearance, in contrast with the slimmer Burman boys. They are capable of considerable physical exertion, but soon tire. [516] The women are well formed and buxom. They have an erect carriage, being used to bearing heavy burdens on their heads or backs. Their teeth, like the men's, are stained with continual betel chewing. In the hills their lack of bathing and their accumulations of beads and charms detract from their appearance; but when they have taken on more cleanly ways they become not unattractive. Their youth is cut short by heavy work in the field, constant childbearing, and nursing, and soon the signs of age appear.

The color of the Karen varies all the way from a light olive complexion to a dark coffee brown. On the whole, their color could be said to range between that of the Burmans and the Chinese. Those who work indoors are, of course, lighter than those who work in the open. Many skins have a distinctly yellowish or red-

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[1] I took a few measurements with the tape line, and found that about seventy men on the plains gave the above average. The tallest was five feet, nine inches, and the shortest was four feet, eleven inches. In the hills my measurements were confined to one village. Here the headman was the tallest, measuring five feet, six inches. The shortest man in the village was four feet and eleven inches in height. Of about twenty women measured the tallest was five feet, five inches, and the shortest, four feet, nine inches. Three were each four feet, ten inches. The average among the women was a very small fraction over five feet. Dr. Mason gives the shortest man, a Bghai chief, as being only four feet, eight inches high, while the shortest woman he measured was four feet, five inches tall. (*Jour., Asiatic Soc. of Bengal*, Vol. XXXV, p. 1.) MacMahon notes that in the Red Karen country the women are usually as tall as, if not taller than, the men. (*The Karens of the Golden Chersonese*, p. 34.)

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1918) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

dish tinge. Infants are often almost as white as European children. Red cheeks are not infrequently found in the Toungoo hills.[1]

Though we often find considerable individuality in the facial features of the Karen, they conform more or less to type, which consists of the broad flat face of the Mongolian races with high cheek-bones and widely set eyes. The eyes have narrow palpebral openings, sometimes slanted, and the characteristic fold at the nasal end. The nose is broad and flat without much of a bridge. The plane of the nostrils is tilted upward, so that the septum and nostrils are quite noticeable. The mouth is usually well shaped, but a few individuals have thick lips and a heavy negroid mouth. The teeth are quite regular and, when not stained with betel, are white and shining.

In the Pegu Hills, in the village of Ngepe, I found a family that had decidedly negroid features. (See cuts on p. 17.) The contrast with the rest of the villagers was marked. Although I could get no hint of a different ancestry in the case of the exceptional family from that of the rest of the people, it was obvious that an admixture of Negrito blood must have taken place somewhere.

The hair of the Karen is generally black, straight, and coarse. Once in a while wavy hair is found, and in rare cases it seems to be almost as kinky as that of the African. Wavy hair is not admired, but, on the contrary, is much disliked. The Karen have an abundance of hair on the scalp. It often reaches to the waist, and I have noticed a few instances in which it reached to the ground. In the early days the custom was for both sexes to wear the hair long, but now the men usually wear theirs short.

The men have scant beards which are seldom allowed to grow, being pulled out with tweezers. The mustache is prized and is coaxed to become as luxuriant as possible. In the few cases where the beard is allowed to grow, it resembles the beards of Chinese men. However, I know a Karen teacher in Bassein who has a beard that would please any inhabitant of Russia. A mole with a few hairs growing from it is greatly treasured, the hairs being allowed to grow as long as they will. Hair on the body and chest of the

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[1] According to Broca's plates for classifying the color of the skin I found, in examining about ninety persons, that twenty-five matched No. 30 of his series; nineteen, No. 25; fifteen, No. 44; eight, No. 26; five each, Nos. 29 and 45; three each, Nos. 36 and 51; two, No. 21, and one each, Nos. 37, 40, 47, and 53. The lightest color found was No. 30. One of the fair ones was an infant, and the other two were men, namely, a clerk and a hill boy. The darkest complexion corresponded to No. 37, of which I found but one. No. 29, which was the color of five of the subjects examined, is a much redder hue than No. 37. All determinations of color were made on unexposed parts of the body where the skin had not been tanned by sunlight.